

## **Board Forum Summary**

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education hosted a forum June 7, 2012 for representatives from local governing boards of higher education institutions, institution presidents and chancellors, and relevant state agency administrators, including the departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and Economic Development. Other groups represented were the Higher Education Partnership, Husch Blackwell law firm, the Council on Public Higher Education and the Missouri Community College Association (sponsors) and the Missouri School Board Association. A total of 115 participants gathered at the Courtyard by Marriott in Columbia for the forum.

The CBHE brought participants together to discuss issues of mutual importance, learn from state and national leaders, and network among themselves and with other governing board members. A brief summary of the agenda follows. Transcripts and additional details can be found by clicking the linked topics.

### **Welcome and bill signing by Governor Jeremiah “Jay” Nixon**

Governor Nixon welcomed guests and summarized the significance of House Bill 1042, saying the bill would improve remediation, align curriculum from high school to college, improve course transfer and help students who have received enough credits for an associate’s degree get that credential.

The state has made significant progress accomplishing the governor’s public agenda for higher education, which focuses on attainment, academic review, collaboration and funding.

Missouri has had the lowest average tuition increases in the nation for the past three years, putting college within reach of more Missouri students. Enrollment surged as a result, setting records each fall and setting the state on a course for greater higher education attainment for its citizens.

In 2010, the governor asked the Department of Higher Education to conduct a review of underperforming academic programs which resulted in the elimination of 118 degree programs and identified under-enrollment in critical fields such as STEM and foreign languages.

Monetary assistance of \$100,000 in state funds and a \$250,000 grant from the Hewlett and Gates foundations launched the Missouri Learning Commons, a collaboration among the state’s public four-year institutions to share redesigns of large-enrollment undergraduate courses. The redesigned courses will be ready for implementation this fall.

This year, the CBHE approved a performance funding model initiated by Gov. Nixon that will ensure that institutions continue to focus on students' success, increase their productivity and assure the high quality of academic programs while continuing to contain costs.

The governor recognized the outstanding contributions of Lincoln President Carolyn Mahoney on the occasion of her retirement.

State Senator David Pearce and Representative Mike Thomson participated in the signing of House Bill 1042 via conference call from South Dakota, where they were attending a conference of the Midwest Higher Education Compact. Sen. Pearce said passing the legislation was the first step, but "now the real work begins." Rep. Thomson called the bill signing "a step forward for higher education in Missouri."

**Keynote – Rich Novak, Association of Governing Boards**  
***Sustaining Effective Governance: Challenges and Opportunities***

Keynote speaker Rich Novak said higher education is a significant election year issue, warranting the engagement of trustees speaking with a unified voice. More is at stake than ever before because degree attainment is flat in the U.S. To regain global leadership in higher education, states must educate more minority, first generation and low income students than ever before.

Governing boards represent their institutions to the community, Novak said, encouraging board members to "let the public hear from you." He cautioned board members to be accountable, demonstrate independence, maintain autonomy and be protectors of their institution's academic freedom, but above all to do "what is best for the state."

In seeking private funding, Novak said governing boards must "engage donors appropriately," to avoid undue influence on the use of institutional resources. "Good governance should trump philanthropy," Novak said. When creating business and industry partnerships, boards should ensure that partnerships are clear, current, protect faculty and their research outcomes, while moving intellectual property to the market efficiently.

Novak predicted that financial challenges will persist into the foreseeable future, requiring institutions to change their business models. This will take engaged, business-savvy trustees who keep the long-term interests of the institutions foremost in mind. "Institutions are not a business," Novak noted, "but they need good governance."

He said the "iron triangle" of higher education is thought to be composed of funding, quality and access. He cautioned institutions not to diminish the other two sides of the

triangle when funding declines. “Involve all the stakeholders” when contemplating restructuring, Novak said, citing the example of Ford Motor Company, which remained viable during the recession by engaging factory workers as well as blue chip investors. Board involvement is critical, said Novak, because “your presidents cannot lead change without the board.”

### **State Financial Outlook – Missouri Budget Director Linda Luebbering**

State Budget Director Linda Luebbering presented a clear but sobering picture of projected economic growth for the state for the next budget cycle. A 3.9 percent revenue increase is “attainable,” Luebbering noted, adding that lottery proceeds must grow by an additional \$35 million to fill projected budget gaps.

The state has managed the influx of one-time funds such as stimulus money by allocating it over multiple years, but these funds are “stair-stepping down” as amounts decrease.

The state faced major budget hurdles last year from natural disasters. Looking ahead, the underfunding of federal mandates, pent-up demand (such as full funding for the K-12 formula), and the European economy all pose significant challenges. Tax credit reform could make \$180 million available to help plug the budget gap projected for 2014.

In response to a question, Luebbering said a one percent increase in state revenue equals about \$80 million. Four percent growth in the economy would result in \$300 million but only \$100 million would be available after funding federal mandates. When asked about the proposed “Fair Tax” ballot initiative, Luebbering said she projects its passage would result in a \$2 billion net loss to the budget, but that its supporters disagree with that figure.

### **Panel Discussion: Maintaining Academic Quality**

**Moderators – Mary Beth Luna Wolf, Rusty Monhollon**

**Panelists – John Jasinski, president of Northwest Missouri State University; Myrtle E. B. Dorsey, chancellor of St. Louis Community Colleges; Jee Hang Lee, public policy director of the Association of Community College Trustees; Rich Novak, senior vice president of the Association of Governing Boards**

(All answers are paraphrased.)

**Q. to Rich Novak:** The Association of Governing Boards published a report on Board Responsibility for the Oversight of Educational Quality. (A summary of it is in the conference packet.) If you had to distill the report down to one or two recommendations for governing boards and their role in academic quality, what would they be?

**A:** Boards need to commit to develop their own capacity for monitoring educational quality on par with monitoring institutional fiscal conditions, review evidence of teaching and learning, and to ensure that the results of student assessment are used to help improve teaching and learning. An excellent overview of the board's responsibilities can be found in [Making the Grade: How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality](#), a book published by AGB and written by Peter Ewell, a former board member of Truman State.

**Q. to Jee Hang Lee:** Institutions are under constant pressure to see that their students complete degree requirements. Do you think this pressure on institutions is eroding academic rigor?

**A:** President Obama's Big Goal to make the U.S. once again the global leader in degree and high quality certificate attainment puts tremendous pressure to graduate 1.5 million students per year. The Big Goal shines a spotlight on what institutions need to do: look at metrics, improve remediation and work with K-12 to improve student preparation. Academic quality is the lifeline for accreditation.

**Q. to Myrtle E. B. Dorsey:** As chair the American Association of Community Colleges board, have you encountered incidents of too much board involvement in academic quality? By that I mean a tendency to micromanage what is being taught, or how it's being taught?

**A:** I know that trustees are genuinely concerned about maintaining academic quality, and that their concern may be misconstrued as micromanagement. I have not seen too much involvement taking place. Board members just want to know and understand, and it is incumbent on administrators to educate the board about what it takes to increase retention by one percent, for example.

**Q. to John Jasinski:** You serve on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award's Panel of Judges, and you have been a judge for the Missouri Quality Award. How have you used your experience in measuring quality to define and measure academic quality at Northwest Missouri State University?

**A:** Measuring quality at Northwest address the Baldrige four types of performance: program and service; student- and stakeholder focused; operational; and budgetary, financial and market. We use mission-driven metrics tied to a four-tier system: Board Review, Executive Review, Executive Reports Review, Departmental Review. The system includes metrics tied to, for example, those available on the [MDHE website](#), and we participate in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#). Baldrige would suggest systems thinking and a broad portfolio of measures (e.g., those widely used instruments mentioned in our readings, alumni surveys, discipline-based surveys, institutionally developed instruments, employer surveys, student portfolios). The principles of assessment (portfolio of assessment tools, variety of learning indicators, various levels

ranging from institutional to departmental) should be in play. Baldrige also stresses alignment (mission/strategy; accrediting; state and affiliated entities – i.e., performance funding, MDHE driven measures, etc.; and regional partnerships. Board delegation of role of assessment vs. being informed on processes (how assessment is approached, what are the key processes, etc.) is absolutely paramount. Boards must engage in academic quality and understand the academic programming offered, respect the role faculty play along with administrators, and receive at least an annual review of key metrics.

**Q. to Rich Novak:** Eight Missouri four-year institutions participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability. Can you give us a broad overview of the VSA and what it is intended to do?

**A:** The book [\*Academically Adrift\*](#), by Richard Arum, focused more attention on academic quality than any other book on higher education. It poses the fundamental question: are undergraduates really learning anything once they get to college? The Voluntary System of Accountability was developed in 2007 by university leaders with start-up funding provided by Lumina. It sets up standardized instruments to measure how schools are doing. It supplies clear, accessible and comparable information on the undergraduate student experience through a web report, the College Portrait, and helps students, parents and academicians address the question of student learning.

**Q. for Jee Hang Lee:** What metrics should governing boards monitor to track academic quality?

**A:** Graduation rates have historically been measured by first-time, full-time students who complete degree requirements in three years for community colleges and six years for four-year institutions. In fact, especially for community colleges, first-time full-time students represent a very small cadre of the population. This year, for the first time, IPEDs has developed a new metric – graduation and transfer rates for part-time students. In addition, institutions should look at community and business stakeholders when choosing the metrics they use: what are your institutions believed to be within the community, and how are you measuring up?

**Q. for panel from the audience:** We used to be thought of as the two-year and four-year sectors, but in reality we're the three-year and six-year sectors because not many students complete their degrees within two and four years. What can be done about this?

**A (Dorsey):** Two good sources of guidance for the community colleges are a brochure, [Learning Outcomes Assessment in Community Colleges](#), which identifies best practices, and the nonprofit organization [Achieving the Dream](#) created in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation to guide evidence-based institutional improvement.

**A (Jasinski):** Create a path for your students. Talk with them about career aspirations and help them lay out the best pathways for reaching them. There is an important mapping process needed to address this: student responsibility, staff support services, faculty, institutional.

**Luncheon speaker – Stan Jones, president, Complete College America**

**[The Big Goal: Educational Attainment and the Future Economy](#)**

Luncheon speaker Stan Jones, founder of Complete College America, said a college degree is now widely seen as the key to the middle class. More Latinos, African-Americans, first generation and low incomes students are enrolling than ever before. College students are beginning to look like the U.S. population. The problem is that many students are lost along the way. The first roadblock to college completion is remediation, required by 60 percent of incoming freshmen.

Complete College America's study, [Bridge to Nowhere](#), provides a comprehensive look at problems of remediation and potential solutions. Some solutions are counter-intuitive, Jones noted. Rather than enrolling students in remedial courses they are likely to drop, put them in regular classes but supply the support they need to succeed in them. Tennessee, for example, was able to triple success rates for under-prepared students when they implemented computer-based tutorials in credit-bearing courses.

Passing college algebra is a growing hurdle for remedial students; for many professions, however, substituting statistics or courses featuring quantitative reasoning provides better alignment with career goals than algebra.

Complete College America's historic report, [Time is the Enemy](#), notes that only one in four students go to a traditional campus and attend full-time. "Those are not the students we're talking about," said Jones. "The system is designed for them, but they are not the emerging majority."

The report shows that completion rates drop as time attending college elapses. "Full-time students graduate at four to five times the rates of part-time students," Jones said. "The problem is that life gets in the way."

The issue of choice is also counter-intuitive. [The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less](#), by Barry Schwartz, explores the concept in detail. Struggling students are faced with too much choice and too little guidance, Jones said. "The more choices they have the less they choose well." Institutions need to provide a GPS system to graduation, and electronic advising often meets this need. The emphasis should be on choosing careers, not courses.

Jones urged institutions to make it easy for students to make wise choices, citing the recent book [\*Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness\*](#) by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein as a thorough exploration of motivating people to make wise decisions.

Missouri has three important assets, according to Jones:

- 1) The governor is supportive of higher education as demonstrated by signing the legislation to improve transfer, which is a major obstacle to college completion. The core transfer library of 25 courses is “a great start,” Jones said, “but more is possible.” He also encouraged greater visibility and ease of use by establishing a common course numbering system.
- 2) The governor is communicating his support for higher education by putting resources into producing more degrees, such as the programs that enhance medical training.
- 3) The involvement of the business community is key, Jones said, citing the emerging Higher Education Partnership as an example of business partnerships. College completions are the key to economic success but can’t be accomplished in a vacuum. “We have to do it together,” Jones said.

### **Small Group Sessions**

#### **Degree Attainment and the Big Goal, moderated by Doris Carter and Rusty Monhollon**

The small group discussion on degree attainment focused on identifying barriers to completion and brainstorming solutions. Hear a summary [here](#).

#### **How Will Higher Education be Funded in the Future? Moderated by Betty Sims and Paul Wagner**

The group discussed how higher education funding is shifting from the public sector to the private sector as institutions rely more on tuition to replace declining state support. Misty Snodgrass of the American Cancer Society provided an overview of the proposed tobacco tax initiative, expected to be on the ballot in November. Thirty percent of the revenue generated by the tax will go to higher education. The group addressed the impacts of budget cuts on student support, class size and faculty retention, and compared and contrasted operating a college or university with running a business.

#### **Forging New Partnerships: Outcomes for Business, Education and Economic Development, moderated by Kathy Swan and Bill Thornton**

Discussion in this small group session centered on how business partnerships on college and university campuses prepare students for the workforce, enhance strategic fields of economic growth and foster entrepreneurship.